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A FEW REASONS FOR DOUBTING THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

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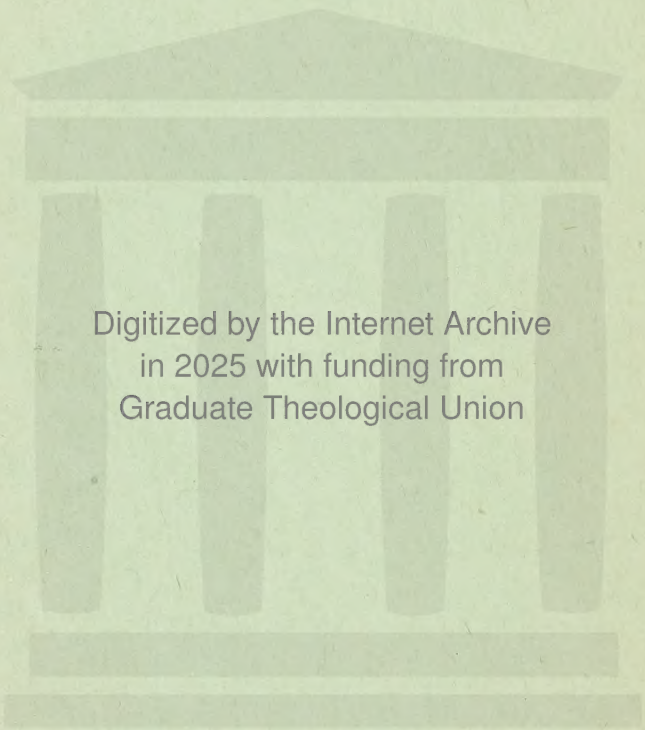
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A FEW REASONS FOR DOUBTING THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE.

BY ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

1. The Old Testament must have been written nearly two thousand years before the invention of printing. There were but few copies, and these were in the keeping of those whose interest might have prompted interpolations, and whose ignorance might have led to mistakes.

2. The written Hebrew was composed entirely of consonants, without any points or marks standing for vowels, so that anything like accuracy was impossible. Anyone can test this for himself by writing an English sentence, leaving out the vowels. It will take far more inspiration to read than to write a book with consonants alone.

3. The books composing the Old Testament were not divided into chapters or verses, and no system of punctuation was known. Think of this a moment and you will see how difficult it must be to read such a book.

4. There was not among the Jews any dictionary of their language, and for this reason the

accurate meaning of words could not be preserved. Now the different meanings of words are preserved so that by knowing the age in which a writer lived we can ascertain with reasonable certainty his meaning.

5. The Old Testament was printed for the first time in 1488. Until this date it existed only in manuscript, and was constantly exposed to erasures and additions.

6. It is now admitted by the most learned in the Hebrew language that in our present English version of the Old Testament there are at least one hundred thousand errors. Of course the believers in inspiration assert that these errors are not sufficient in number to cast the least suspicion upon any passages upholding what are called the "fundamentals."

7. It is not certainly known who in fact wrote any of the books of the Old Testament. For instance, it is now generally conceded that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch.

8. Other books, not now in existence, are referred to in the Old Testament as of equal authority, such as the books of Jasher, Nathan, Ahijah, Iddo, Jehu, Sayings of the Seers.

9. The Christians are not agreed among themselves as to what books are inspired. The Catholics claim as inspired the books of Maccabees, Tobit, Esdras, etc. Others doubt the inspiration of Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

10. In the book of Esther and the Song of Solomon the name of God is not mentioned, and no reference is made to any supreme being, nor to

any religious duty. These omissions would seem sufficient to cast a little doubt upon these books.

11. Within the present century manuscript copies of the Old Testament have been found throwing new light and changing in many instances the present readings. In consequence a new version is now being made by a theological syndicate composed of English and American divines, and after this is published it may be that our present Bible will fall into disrepute.

12. The fact that language is continually changing, that words are constantly dying and others being born; that the same word has a variety of meanings during its life, shows how hard it is to preserve the original ideas that might have been expressed in the scriptures, for thousands of years, without dictionaries, without the art of printing, and without the light of contemporaneous literature.

13. Whatever there was of the Old Testament seems to have been lost from the time of Moses until the days of Josiah, and it is probable that nothing like the Bible existed in any permanent form among the Jews until a few hundred years before Christ. It is said that Ezra gave the Pentateuch to the Jews, but whether he found or originated it is unknown. So it is claimed that Nehemiah gathered up the manuscripts about the kings and prophets, while the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, and some others were either collected or written long after. The Jews themselves did not agree as to what books were really inspired.

14. In the Old Testament we find several contradictory laws about the same thing, and contradictory accounts of the same occurrences. In the twentieth chapter of Exodus we find the first account of the giving of the Ten Commandments. In the thirty-fourth chapter another account is given. These two accounts could never have been written by the same person. Read these two accounts and you will be forced to admit that one of them cannot be true. So there are two histories of the creation, of the flood, and of the manner in which Saul became king.

15. It is now generally admitted that Genesis must have been written by two persons, and the parts written by each can be separated, and when separated they are found to contradict each other in many important particulars.

16. It is also admitted that copyists made verbal changes not only, but pieced out fragments; that the speeches of Elihu in the book of Job were all interpolated, and that most of the prophecies were made by persons whose names we have never known.

17. The manuscripts of the Old Testament were not alike, and the Greek version differed from the Hebrew, and there was no absolutely received text of the Old Testament until after the commencement of the Christian era. Marks and points to denote vowels were invented probably about the seventh century after Christ. Whether these vowels were put in the proper places or not is still an open question.

18. The Alexandrian version, or what is known

as the Septuagint, translated by seventy learned Jews, assisted by "miraculous power," about two hundred years before Christ, could not have been, it is said, translated from the Hebrew text that we now have. The differences can only be accounted for by supposing that they had a different Hebrew text. The early Christian churches adopted the Septuagint, and were satisfied for a time. But so many errors were found, and so many were scanning every word in search of something to sustain their peculiar views, that several new versions appeared, all different somewhat from the Hebrew manuscripts, from the Septuagint, and from each other. All these versions were in Greek. The first Latin Bible originated in Africa, but no one has ever found out which Latin manuscript was the original. Many were produced, and all differed from each other. These Latin versions were compared with each other and with the Hebrew, and a new Latin version was made in the fifth century, but the old Latin versions held their own for about four hundred years, and no one yet knows which were right. Besides these there were Egyptian, Ethiopic, Armenian, and several others, all differing from each other as well as from all others in the world.

It was not until the fourteenth century that the Bible was translated into German, and not until the fifteenth that Bibles were printed in the principal languages of Europe. Of these Bibles there were several kinds—Luther's, the Dort, King James's, Genevan, French, besides the Danish and Swedish. Most of these differed from each other,

and gave rise to infinite disputes and crimes without number. The earliest fragment of the Bible in the "Saxon" language known to exist was written sometime in the seventh century. The first Bible was printed in England in 1538. In 1560 the first English Bible was printed that was divided into verses. Under Henry VIII. the Bible was revised; again under Queen Elizabeth, and once again under King James. This last was published in 1611, and is the one now in general use.

19. No one in the world has learning enough, nor has he time enough even if he had the learning, and could live a thousand years, to find out what books really belong to and constitute the Old Testament, the authors of these books, when they were written, and what they really mean. And until a man has the learning and time to do all this he cannot certainly tell whether he believes the Bible or not.

20. If a revelation from God was actually necessary to the happiness of man here and to his salvation hereafter, it is not easy to see why such revelation was not given to all the nations of the earth. Why were the millions of Asia, Egypt, and America left to the insufficient light of nature. Why was not a written, or what is still better, a printed revelation given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden? And why were the Jews themselves without a Bible until the days of Ezra the scribe? Why was nature not so made that it would give light enough? Why did God make men and leave them in darkness—a darkness that

he knew would fill the world with want and crime and crowd with damned souls the dungeons of his hell? Were the Jews the only people who needed a revelation? It may be said that God had no time to waste with other nations, and gave the Bible to the Jews that other nations through them might learn of his existence and his will. If he wished other nations to be informed, and revealed himself to but one, why did he not choose a people that mingled with others? Why did he give the message to those who had no commerce, who were obscure and unknown, and who regarded other nations with the hatred born of bigotry and weakness? What would we now think of a God who made his will known to the South Sea Islanders for the benefit of the civilized world? If it was of such vast importance for man to know that there is a God, why did not God make himself known? This fact could have been revealed by an infinite being instantly to all, and there certainly was no necessity of telling it alone to the Jews, and allowing millions for thousands of years to die in utter ignorance.

21. The Chinese, Japanese, Hindus, Tartars, Africans, Eskimos, Persians, Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Polynesians, and many other peoples, are substantially ignorant of the Bible. All the Bible societies of the world have produced only about one hundred and twenty millions of Bibles, and there are about fourteen hundred million people. There are hundreds of languages and tongues in which no Bible has yet been printed. Why did God allow, and why does he still allow, a vast

majority of his children to remain in ignorance of his will?

22. If the Bible is the foundation of all civilization, of all just ideas of right and wrong, of our duties to God and each other, why did God not give to each nation at least one copy to start with? He must have known that no nation could get along successfully without a Bible, and he also knew that man could not make one for himself. Why, then, were not the books furnished? He must have known that the light of nature was not sufficient to reveal the scheme of the atonement, the necessity of baptism, the immaculate conception, transubstantiation, the arithmetic of the trinity, nor the resurrection of the dead.

23. It is probably safe to say that not one-third of the inhabitants of this world ever heard of the Bible, and not one-tenth ever read it. It is also safe to say that no two persons who ever read it agreed as to its meaning, and it is not likely that even one person has ever understood it. Nothing is more needed at the present time than an inspired translator. Then we shall need an inspired commentator, and the translation and the commentary should be written in an inspired universal language, incapable of change, and then, the whole world should be inspired to understand this language precisely the same. Until these things are accomplished, all written revelations from God will fill the world with contending sects contradictory creeds and opinions.

24. All persons who know anything of constitutions and laws know how impossible it is to use

words that will convey the same ideas to all. The best statesmen, the profoundest lawyers, differ as widely about the real meaning of treaties and statutes as do theologians about the Bible. When the differences of lawyers are left to courts, and the courts give written decisions, the lawyers will again differ as to the real meaning of the opinions. Probably no two lawyers in the United States understand our Constitution alike. To allow a few men to tell what the Constitution means, and to hang for treason all who refuse to accept the opinions of these few men, would accomplish in politics what most churches have asked for in religion.

25. Is it very wicked to deny that the universe was created of nothing by an infinite being who existed from all eternity? The human mind is such that it cannot possibly conceive of creation, neither can it conceive of an infinite being who dwelt in infinite space an infinite length of time.

26. The idea that the universe was made in six days, and is but about six thousand years old, is too absurd for serious refutation. Neither will it do to say that the six days were six periods, because this does away with the Sabbath, and is in direct violation of the text.

27. Neither is it reasonable that this God made man out of dust, and woman out of one of the ribs of the man; that this pair were put in a garden; that they were deceived by a snake that had the power of speech; that they were turned out of this garden to prevent them from eating of the tree of life and becoming immortal; that God himself

made them clothes; that the sons of God intermarried with the daughters of men; that to destroy all life upon the earth a flood was sent that covered the highest mountains; that Noah and his sons built an ark and saved some of all animals as well as themselves; that the people tried to build a tower that would reach to heaven; that God confounded their language, and in this way frustrated their design.

28. It is hard to believe that God talked to Abraham as one man talks to another; that he gave him land that he pointed out; that he agreed to give him land that he never did; that he ordered him to murder his own son; that angels were in the habit of walking about the earth eating veal dressed with butter and milk, and making bargains about the destruction of cities.

29. Certainly a man ought not to be eternally damned for entertaining an honest doubt about a woman having been turned into a pillar of salt, about cities being destroyed by storms of fire and brimstone, and about people once having lived for nearly a thousand years.

30. Neither is it probable that God really wrestled with Jacob and put his thigh out of joint, and that for that reason the Jews refused "to eat the sinew that shrank," as recounted in the thirty-second chapter of Genesis; that God in the likeness of a flame inhabited a bush; that he amused himself by changing the rod of Moses into a serpent, and making his hand leprous as snow.

31. One can scarcely be blamed for hesitating to believe that God met Moses at a hotel and tried

to kill him;[1] that afterward he made this same Moses a god to Pharaoh, and gave him his brother Aaron for a prophet;[2] that he turned all the ponds and pools and streams and all the rivers into blood,[3] and all the water in vessels of wood and stone; that the rivers thereupon brought forth frogs;[4] that the frogs covered the whole land of Egypt; that he changed dust into lice, so that all the men, women, children, and animals were covered with them;[5] that he sent swarms of flies upon the Egyptians;[6] that he destroyed the innocent cattle with painful diseases; that he covered man and beast with blains and boils;[7] that he so covered the magicians of Egypt with boils that they could not stand before Moses for the purpose of performing the same feat;[8] that he destroyed every beast and every man that was in the fields, and every herb, and broke every tree with storm of hail and fire;[9] that he sent locusts that devoured every herb that escaped the hail, and devoured every tree that grew;[10] that he caused thick darkness over the land and put lights in the houses of the Jews;[11] that he destroyed all of the firstborn of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh upon the throne to the firstborn of the maidservant that sat behind the mill,[12] together with the firstborn

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[1]Ex. iv, 24.
[2]Ex. vii, 1.
[3]Ex. vii, 19.
[4]Ex. viii, 3.
[5]Ex. viii, 16, 17.
[6]Ex. viii, 21.
[7]Ex. ix, 9.
[8]Ex. ix, 11.
[9]Ex. ix, 25.
[10]Ex. x, 15.
[11]Ex. x, 22, 23.
[12]Ex. xi, 5

of all beasts, so that there was not a house in which the dead were not.[1]

32. It is very hard to believe that three millions of people left a country and marched twenty or thirty miles all in one day. To notify so many people would require a long time, and then the sick, the halt, and the old would be apt to impede the march. It seems impossible that such a vast number—600 000 men, besides women and children—could have been cared for, could have been fed and clothed, and the sick nursed, especially when we take into consideration that "they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual."[2]

33. It seems cruel to punish a man forever for denying that God went before the Jews by day "in a pillar of a cloud to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light to go by day and night," or for denying that Pharaoh pursued the Jews with six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and that the six hundred thousand men of war of the Jews were sore afraid when they saw the pursuing hosts. It does seem strange that after all the water in a country had been turned to blood—after it had been overrun with frogs and devoured with flies; after all the cattle had died with the murrain, and the rest had been killed by the fire and hail and the remainder had suffered with boils, and the firstborn of all that were left had died; that after locusts had devoured

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[1]Ex. xii, 29, 30.

[2]Ex. xii, 37–39.

every herb and eaten up every tree of the field, and the firstborn had died, from the firstborn of the king on the throne to the first born of the captive in the dungeon; that after three millions of people had left, carrying with them the jewels of silver and gold and the raiment of their oppressors, the Egyptians still had enough soldiers and chariots and horses left to pursue and destroy an army of six hundred thousand men, if God had not interfered.

34. It certainly ought to satisfy God to torment a man for four or five thousand years for insisting that it is but a small thing for an infinite being to vanquish an Egyptian army; that it was rather a small business to trouble people with frogs, flies, and vermin; that it looked almost malicious to cover people with boils and afflict cattle with disease; that a real good God would not torture innocent beasts on account of something the owners had done; that it was absurd to do miracles before a king to induce him to act in a certain way, and then harden his heart so that he would refuse; and that to kill all the firstborn of a nation was the act of a heartless fiend.

35. Certainly one ought to be permitted to doubt that twelve wells of water were sufficient for three millions of people, together with their flocks and herds,[1] and to inquire a little into the nature of manna that was cooked by baking and seething and yet would melt in the sun,[2] and that would swell or shrink so as to make an exact

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[1]Ex. xv, 27. [2]Ex. xvi, 23, 21.

omer, no matter how much or how little there really was.[1] Certainly it is not a crime to say that water cannot be manufactured by striking a rock with a stick, and that the fate of battle cannot be decided by lifting one hand up or letting it fall.[2] Must we admit that God really did come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people; that he commanded that all who should go up into the Mount or touch the border of it should be put to death, and that even the beasts that came near it should be killed? Is it wrong to laugh at this? Is it sinful to say that God never spoke from the top of a mountain covered with clouds these words to Moses, "Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish; and let the priests also, which come near to the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them?"[4] Can it be that an infinite intelligence takes delight in scaring savages, and that he is happy only when somebody trembles? Is it reasonable to suppose that God surrounded himself with thunderings and lightnings and thick darkness to tell the priests that they should not make altars of hewn stones, nor with stairs?[5] and that this God at the same time he gave the Ten Commandments ordered the Jews to break the most of them? According to the Bible these infamous words came from the mouth of God while he was wrapped and clothed in darkness and clouds upon the Mount of Sinai:

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[1]Ex. xvi, 18.
[2]Ex. xvii, 11, 12.
[3]Ex. xix, 12, 13.
[4]Ex. xix, 21, 22.
[5]Ex. xx, 25, 26.

If thou buy an Hebrew servant six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in by himself he shall go out by himself; if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door or unto the doorpost; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.[1] And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished; for he is his money.[2]

Do you really think that a man will be eternally damned for endeavoring to wipe from the record of God those barbaric words?

36. Is it because of total depravity that some people refuse to believe that God went into partnership with insects and granted letters of marque and reprisal to hornets;[3] that he wasted forty days and nights furnishing Moses with plans and specifications for a tabernacle, an ark, a mercy seat and two cherubs of gold, a table, four rings, some dishes and spoons, one candlestick, three bowls, seven lamps, a pair of tongs, some snuff dishes (for all of which God had patterns), ten curtains with fifty loops, a roof for the tabernacle of rams' skins dyed red, a lot of boards, an altar with horns, ash pans, basins, and flesh hooks, and fillets of silver and pins of brass; that he told

[1] Ex. xxi, 2–6.
[2] Ex. xxi, 20, 21.
[3] Ex. xxiii, 28.

Moses to speak unto all the wise-hearted that he had filled with wisdom, that they might make a suit of clothes for Aaron, and that God actually gave directions that an ephod "shall have the two shoulder-pieces thereof joined at the two edges thereof," and gave all the orders concerning mitres, girdles, and onyx stones, ouches, emeralds, breastplates, chains, rings, Urim and Thummim, and the hole in the top of the ephod like the hole of a habergeon?[1]

37. Is there a Christian missionary who could help laughing if in any heathen country he had seen the following command of God carried out? "And thou shalt take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the ram. Then shalt thou kill the ram and take of his blood and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot.[2] Does one have to be born again to appreciate the beauty and solemnity of such a performance? Is not the faith of the most zealous Christian somewhat shaken while reading the recipes for cooking mutton, veal, beef, birds, and unleavened dough, found in the cook book that God made for Aaron and his sons?

38. Is it to be wondered at that some people have doubted the statement that God told Moses how to make some ointment, hair oil, and perfume, and then made it a crime punishable with death to

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[1]Ex. xxvii and xxviii. [2]Ex. xxix, 19, 20.

make any like them? Think of a God killing a man for imitating his ointment?[1] Think of a God saying that he made heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh day and was refreshed![2] Think of this God threatening to destroy the Jews, and being turned from his purpose because Moses told him that the Egyptians might mock him![3]

39. What must we think of a man impudent enough to break in pieces tables of stone upon which God had written with his finger? What must we think of the goodness of a man that would issue the following order: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day?"[4] Is it true that the God of the Bible demanded human sacrifice? Did it please him for man to kill his neighbor, for brother to murder his brother, and for the father to butcher his son? If there is a God let him cause it to be written in the book of his memory, opposite my name, that I refuted this slander and denied this lie.

40. Can it be true that God was afraid to trust himself with the Jews for fear he would consume them? Can it be that in order to keep from

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[1]Ex. xxx, 33.
[2]Ex. xxxi, 17.
[3]Ex. xxxii, 11, 12.
[4]Ex. xxxii, 27–29.

devouring them he kept away and sent one of his angels in his place?[1] Can it be that this same God talked to Moses "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend," when it is declared in the same chapter, by God himself, 'Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live?"[2]

41. Why should a man, because he has done a bad action, go and kill a sheep? How can man make friends with God by cutting the throats of bullocks and goats? Why should God delight in the shedding of blood? Why should he want his altar sprinkled with blood, and the horns of his altar tipped with blood, and his priests covered with blood? Why should burning flesh be a sweet savor in the nostrils of God? Why did he compel his priests to be butchers, cutters, and stabbers? Why should this same God kill a man for eating the fat of an ox, a sheep, or a goat?

42. Could it be a consolation to a man when dying to think that he had always believed that God told Aaron to take two goats and draw cuts to see which goat should be killed and which should be a scapegoat?[3] And that upon the head of the scapegoat Aaron should lay both his hands and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, and put them all on the head of the goat, and send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness; and that the goat should bear upon him all the iniquities of the people into a land not in-

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[1]Ex. xxxiii, 2, 3.
[2]Ex. xxxiii, 11, 20.
[3]Lev. xvi, 8.

habited?[1] How could a goat carry away a load of iniquities and transgressions? Why should he carry them to a land uninhabited? Were these sins contagious? About how many sins could an average goat carry? Could a man meet such a goat now without laughing?

43. Why should God object to a man wearing a garment made of woolen and linen? Why should he care whether a man rounded the corners of his beard?[2] Why should God prevent a man from offering the sacred bread merely because he had a flat nose, or was lame, or had five fingers on one hand, or had a broken foot, or was a dwarf? If he objected to such people, why did he make them?[3]

44. Why should we believe that God insisted upon the sacrifice of human beings? Is it a sin to deny this, and to deny the inspiration of a book that teaches it? Read the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses of the last chater of Leviticus, a book in which there is more folly and cruelty, more stupidity and tyranny, than in any other book in this world except some others in the same Bible. Read the thirty-second chapter of Exodus and you will see how by the most infamous of crimes man becomes reconciled to this God. You will see that he demands of fathers the blood of their sons. Read the twelfth and thirteenth verses of the third chapter of Numbers, "And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel," etc.

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[1] Lev. xvi, 21, 22.
[2] Lev. xix, 19, 27.
[3] Lev. xxi, 18–20.

How, in the desert of Sinai, did the Jews obtain curtains of fine linen? How did these absconding slaves make cherubs of gold? Where did they get the skins of badgers, and how did they dye them red? How did they make wreathed chains and spoons, basins and tongs? Where did they get the blue cloth and their purple? Where did they get the sockets of brass? How did they coin the shekel of the sanctuary? How did they overlay boards with gold? Where did they get the numberless instruments and tools necessary to accomplish all these things? Where did they get the fine flour and the oil? Were all these found in the desert of Sinai? Is it a sin to ask these questions? Are all these doubts born of a malignant and depraved heart? Why should God in this desert prohibit priests from drinking wine, and from eating moist grapes? How could these priests get wine?

Do not these passages show that these laws were made long after the Jews had left the desert, and that they were not given from Sinai? Can you imagine a God silly enough to tell a horde of wandering savages upon a desert that they must not eat any fruit of the trees they planted until the fourth year?

45. Ought a man to be despised and persecuted for denying that God ordered the priests to make women drink dirt and water to test their virtue?[1] Or for denying that over the tabernacle there was a cloud during the day and fire by

[1]Num. v. 12–31.

night, and that the cloud lifted up when God wished the Jews to travel, and that until it was lifted they remained in their tents?[1] Can it be possible that the "ark of the covenant" traveled on its own account, and that "when the ark set forward" the people followed, as is related in the tenth chapter of the holy book of Numbers?

46. Was it reasonable for God to give the Jews manna, and nothing else, year after year? He had infinite power, and could just as easily have given them something good, in reasonable variety, as to have fed them on manna until they loathed the sight of it, and longingly remembered the fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic of Egypt. And yet when the poor people complained of the diet and asked for a little meat, this loving and merciful God became enraged, sent them millions of quails in his wrath, and while they were eating, while the flesh was yet between their teeth, before it was chewed, this amiable God smote the people with a plague and killed all those that lusted after meat. In a few days after, he made up his mind to kill the rest, but was dissuaded when Moses told him that the Canaanites would laugh at him?[2] No wonder the poor Jews wished they were back in Egypt. No wonder they had rather be the slaves of Pharaoh than the chosen people of God. No wonder they preferred the wrath of Egypt to the love of heaven. In my judgment the Jews would have fared far better if

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[1]Num. ix, 16–18. [2]Num. xiv, 15, 16.

Jehovah had let them alone, or had he even taken the side of the Egyptians.

When the poor Jews were told by their spies that the Canaanites were giants, they, seized with fear, said, "Let us go back to Egypt." For this, their God doomed all except Joshua and Caleb to a wandering death. Hear the words of this most merciful God: "But as for you, your carcases they shall fall in this wilderness, and your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years and bear your" sins "until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness."[1] And yet this same God promised to give unto all these people a land flowing with milk and honey.

47. "And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day.

"And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation.

"And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.

"And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died."[2]

When the last stone was thrown, and he that was a man was but a mangled, bruised, and broken mass, this God turned, and, *touched with pity*, said:

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[1] Num. xiv, 32, 33. [2] Num. xv, 32–36.

"Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a riband of blue."[1]

In the next chapter, this Jehovah, whose loving kindness is over all his works, because Korah, Dathan, and Abiram objected to being starved to death in the wilderness, made the earth open and swallow not only them but their wives and their little ones. Not yet satisfied, he sent a plague and killed fourteen thousand seven hundred more. There never was in the history of the world such a cruel, revengeful, bloody, jealous, fickle, unreasonable, and fiendish ruler, emperor, or king as Jehovah. No wonder the children of Israel cried out, "Behold we die, we perish, we all perish."

48. I cannot believe that a dry stick budded, blossomed, and bore almonds; that the ashes of a red heifer are a purification for sin;[2] that God gave cities into the hands of the Jews because they solemnly agreed to murder all the inhabitants; that God became enraged and induced snakes to bite his chosen people; that God told Balaam to go with the princes of Moab, and then got angry because he did go; that an animal ever saw an angel and conversed with a man. I cannot believe that thrusting a spear through the body of a woman ever stayed a plague;[3] that any good man ever ordered his soldiers to slay the men and keep the

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[1]Num. xv, 38.
[2]Num. xix, 2–10.
[3]Num. xxv, 8.

maidens alive for themselves; that God commanded men not to show mercy to each other; that he induced men to obey his commandments by promising them that he would assist them in murdering the wives and children of their neighbors; or that he ever commanded a man to kill his wife because she differed with him about religion;[1] or that God was mistaken about hares chewing the cud;[2] or that he objected to the people raising horses;[3] or that God wanted a camp kept clean because he walked through it at night;[4] or that he commanded widows to spit in the faces of their brothers-in-law;[5] or that he ever threatened to give anybody the itch;[6] or that he ever secretly buried a man and allowed the corpse to write an account of the funeral.

49. Does it necessarily follow that a man wishes to commit some crime if he refuses to admit that the river Jordon cut itself in two and allowed the lower end to run away?[7] Or that seven priests could blow seven ram's horns loud enough to throw down the walls of a city;[8] or that God, after Achan had confessed that he had secreted a garment and a wedge of gold, became good natured as soon as Achan and his sons and daughters had been stoned to death and their bodies burned?[9] Is it not a virtue to abhor such a God?

Must we believe that God sanctioned and com-

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[1]Deut. xiii, 6–10.
[2]Deut. xiv, 7.
[3]Deut xvii, 16.
[4]Deut. xxiii, 13, 14.
[5]Deut. xxv, 9.
[6]Deut. xxviii, 27.
[7]Josh. iii, 16.
[8]Josh. vi, 20.
[9]Josh. vii, 24, 25.

manded all the cruelties and horrors described in the Old Testament; that he waged the most relentless and heartless wars; that he declared mercy a crime; that to spare life was to excite his wrath; that he smiled when maidens were violated, laughed when mothers were ripped open with a sword, and shouted with joy when babes were butchered in their mothers' arms? Read the infamous book of Joshua, and then worship the God who inspired it if you can.

50. Can any sane man believe that the sun stood still in the midst of heaven and hasted not to go down about a whole day, and that the moon stayed?[1] That these miracles were performed in the interest of massacre and bloodshed; that the Jews destroyed men, women, and children by the million, and practiced every cruelty that the ingenuity of their God could suggest? Is it possible that these things really happened? Is it possible that God commanded them to be done? Again I ask you to read the book of Joshua. After reading all its horrors you will feel a grim satisfaction in the dying words of Joshua to the children of Israel: "Know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land."[2]

Think of a God who boasted that he gave the Jews a land for which they did not labor, cities

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[1]Josh. x, 13. [2]Josh. xxiii, 13.

which they did not build, and allowed them to eat of oliveyards and vineyards which they did not plant.[1] Think of a God who murders some of his children for the benefit of the rest, and then kills the rest because they are not thankful enough. Think of a God who had the power to stop the sun and moon, but could not defeat an army that had iron chariots.[2]

51. Can we blame the Hebrews for getting tired of their God? Never was a people so murdered, starved, stoned, burned, deceived, humiliated, robbed, and outraged. Never was there so little liberty among men. Never did the meanest king so meddle, eavesdrop, spy out, harass, torment, and persecute his people. Never was ruler so jealous, unreasonable, contemptible, exacting, and ignorant as this God of the Jews. Never was such ceremony, such mummery, such stuff about bullocks, goats, doves, red heifers, lambs, and unleavened dough—never were such directions about kidneys and blood, ashes and fat, about curtains, tongs, fringes, ribands, and brass pins—never such details for killing of animals and men and the sprinkling of blood and the cutting of clothes. Never were such unjust laws, such punishments, such damned ignorance and infamy!

52. Is it not wonderful that the creator of all worlds, infinite in power and wisdom, could not hold his own against the gods of wood and stone? Is it not strange that after he had appeared to his chosen

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[1] Josh. xxiv, 13. [2] Judges i, 19.

people, delivered them from slavery, fed them by miracles, opened the sea for a path, led them by cloud and fire, and overthrown their pursuers, they still preferred a calf of their own making? Is it not beyond belief that this God, by statutes and commandments, by punishments and penalties, by rewards and promises, by wonders and plagues, by earthquakes and pestilence, could not in the least civilize the Jews—could not get them beyond a point where they deserved killing? What shall we think of a God who gave his entire time for forty years to the work of converting three millions of people, and succeeded in getting only two men, and not a single woman, decent enough to enter the promised land? Was there ever in the history of man so detestable an administration of public affairs? Is it possible that God sold his children to the king of Mesopotamia; that he sold them to Jabin, king of Canaan, to the Philistines, and to the children of Ammon? Is it possible that an angel of the Lord devoured unleavened cakes and broth with fire that came out of the end of a stick as he sat under an oak-tree?[1] Can it be true that God made known his will by making dew fall on wool without wetting the ground around it?[2] Do you really believe that men who lap water like a dog make the best soldiers?[3] Do you think that a man could hold a lamp in his left hand, a trumpet in his right hand, blow his trumpet, shout "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon,"[3] and break pitchers at the same time?[4]

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[1] Judges vi, 21.
[2] Judges vi, 37.
[3] Judges vii, 5.
[4] Judges vii, 20.

53. Read the story of Jephthah and his daughter, and then tell me what you think of a father who would sacrifice his daughter to God, and what you think of a God who would receive such a sacrifice. This one story should be enough to make every tender and loving father hold this book in utter abhorrence. Is it necessary, in order to be saved, that one must believe that an angel of God appeared unto Manoah in the absence of her husband; that this angel afterward went up in a flame of fire; that as a result of this visit a child was born whose strength was in his hair? a child that made beehives of lions, incendiaries of foxes, and had a wife that wept seven days to get the answer to his riddle? Will the wrath of God abide forever upon a man for doubting the story that Samson killed a thousand men with a new jawbone? Is there enough in the Bible to save a soul with this story left out? Is hell hungry for those who deny that water gushed from a "hollow place" in a dry bone? Is it evidence of a new heart to believe that one man turned over a house so large that over three thousand people were on the roof? For my part, I cannot believe these things, and if my salvation depends upon my credulity I am as good as damned already. I cannot believe that the Philistines took back the ark with a present of five gold mice, and that thereupon God relented.[1] I cannot believe that God killed fifty thousand men for looking into a box.[2] It seems incredible, after all the Jews had done, after all their wars

[1] 1 Sam. vi, 4. [2] 1 Sam. vi, 19.

and victories, even when Saul was king, that there was not among them one smith who could make a sword or spear, and that they were compelled to go to the Philistines to sharpen every plowshare, coulter, and mattock.[1] Can you believe that God said to Saul, "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling?" Can you believe that because Saul took the king alive after killing every other man, woman, and child, the ogre called Jehovah was displeased and made up his mind to hurl Saul from the throne and give his place to another?[2] I cannot believe that the Philistines all ran away because one of their number was killed with a stone. I cannot justify the conduct of Abigail, the wife of Nabal, who took presents to David. David hardly did right when he said to this woman, "I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person." It could hardly have been chance that made Nabal so deathly sick next morning and killed him in ten days. All this looks wrong, especially as David married his widow before poor Nabal was fairly cold.[3]

54. Notwithstanding all I have heard of Katie King, I cannot believe that a witch at Endor materialized the ghost of Samuel and caused it to appear with a cloak on.[4] I cannot believe that God tempted David to take the census, and then gave him his choice of three punishments: 1. Seven years of famine; 2. Flying three months be-

[1] 1 Sam. xiii, 19, 20.
1 Sam. xv.
[3] 1 Sam. xxv.
[4] 1 Sam. xxviii.

fore their enemies; 3. A pestilence of three days; that David chose the pestilence, and that God destroyed seventy thousand men.[1] Why should God kill the people for what David did? Is it a sin to be counted? Can anything more brutally hellish be conceived? Why should man waste prayers upon such a God?

55. Must we admit that Elijah was fed by ravens; that they brought him bread and flesh every morning and evening? Must we believe that this same prophet could create meal and oil, and induce a departed soul to come back and take up its residence once more in the body? That he could get rain by praying for it; that he could cause fire to burn up a sacrifice and altar, together with twelve barrels of water?[2] Can we believe that an angel of the Lord turned cook and prepared two suppers in one night for Elijah, and that the prophet ate enough to last him forty days and forty nights?[3] Is it true that when a captain with fifty men went after Elijah, this prophet caused fire to come down from heaven and consume them all? Should God allow such wretches to manage his fire? Is it true that Elijah consumed another captain with fifty men in the same way?[4] Is it a fact that a river divided because the water was struck with a cloak? Did a man actually go to heaven in a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire, or was he carried to Paradise by a whirlwind? Must we believe, in order to be

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[1] 2 Sam. xxiv.
[2] 1 Kings xviii.
[3] 1 Kings xix.
[4] 2 Kings i.

good and tender fathers and mothers, that because some "little children" mocked at an old man with a bald head, God—the same God who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me"—sent two she-bears out of the wood and tare forty-two of these babes? Think of the mothers that watched and waited for their children. Think of the wailing when these mangled ones were found, when they were brought back and pressed to the breasts of weeping women. What an amiable gentleman Mr. Elisha must have been.[1]

56. It is hard to believe that a prophet by lying on a dead body could make it sneeze seven times; or that being dipped seven times in the Jordan could cure the leprosy.[3] Would a merciful God curse children, and children's children yet unborn, with leprosy for a father's fault?[4] Is it possible to make iron float in water?[5] Is it reasonable to say that when a corpse touched another corpse it came to life?[6] Is it a sign that a man wants to commit a crime because he refuses to believe that a king had a boil and that God caused the sun to go backward in heaven so that the shadow on a sun-dial went back ten degrees as a sign that the aforesaid would get well?[7] Is it true that this globe turned backward, that its motion was reversed as a sign to a Jewish king? If it did not, this story is false, and that part of the Bible is not true even if it is inspired.

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[1] 2 Kings ii.
2 Kings iv.
[3] 2 Kings v.
[4] 2 Kings v, 27.
[5] 2 Kings vi, 6.
[6] 2 Kings xiii, 21.
[7] 2 Kings xx, 1–11

57. How did the Bible get lost?[1] Where was the precious Pentateuch from Moses to Josiah? How was it possible for the Jews to get along without the directions as to fat and caul and kidney contained in Leviticus? Without that sacred book in his possession a priest might take up ashes and carry them out without changing his pantaloons. Such mistakes kindled the wrath of God.

As soon as the Pentateuch was found Josiah began killing wizards and such as had familiar spirits.

58. I cannot believe that God talked to Solomon, that he visited him in the night and asked him what he should give him; I cannot believe that he told him, "I will give thee riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings have had before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like."[2] If Jehovah said this he was mistaken. It is not true that Solomon had fourteen hundred chariots of war in a country without roads. It is not true that he made gold and silver at Jerusalem as plenteous as stones. There were several kings in his day, and thousands since, that could have thrown away the value of Palestine without missing the amount. The Holy Land was and is a wretched country. There are no monuments, no ruins attesting former wealth and greatness. The Jews had no commerce, knew nothing of other nations, had no luxuries, never produced a painter, a sculptor,

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[1] 2 Kings xxii, 8. [2] 2 Chron. i, 7. 12.

architect, scientist, or statesman until after the destruction of Jerusalem. As long as Jehovah attended to their affairs they had nothing but civil war, plague, pestilence, and famine. After he abandoned, and the Christians ceased to persecute them, they became the most prosperous of people. Since Jehovah, in anger and disgust, cast them away they have produced painters, sculptors, scientists, statesmen, composers, and philosophers.

59. I cannot admit that Hiram, the king of Tyre, wrote a letter to Solomon in which he admitted that the "God of Israel made heaven and earth."[1] This king was not a Jew. It seems incredible that Solomon had eighty thousand men hewing timber for the temple, with seventy thousands bearers of burdens, and thirty-six hundred overseers.[2]

60. I cannot believe that God shuts up heaven and prevents rain, or that he sends locusts to devour a land, or pestilence to destroy the people.[3] I cannot believe that God told Solomon that his eyes and heart should perpetually be in the house that Solomon had built.[4]

61. I cannot believe that Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches; that all the kings of the earth sought his presence and brought presents of silver and gold, raiment, harness, spices, and mules—a rate year by year.[5] Is it possible that Shishak, king of Egypt, invaded Palestine with seventy thousand horsemen and twelve hundred

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[1] 2 Chron. ii, 12.
[2] 2 Chron. ii, 18.
[3] 2 Chron. vii, 13.
[4] 2 Chron. vii, 16.
[5] 2 Chron. ix, 22–24.

chariots of war?[1] I cannot believe that in a battle between Jeroboam and Abijah, the army of Abijah actually slew in one day five hundred thousand chosen men.[2] Does anyone believe that Zerah, the Ethiopian, invaded Palestine with a million men?[3] I cannot believe that Jehoshaphat had a standing army of nine hundred and sixty thousand men.[4] I cannot believe that God advertised for a liar to act as his messenger.[5] I cannot believe that King Amaziah did right in the sight of the Lord, and that he broke in pieces ten thousand men by casting them from a precipice.[6] I cannot think that God smote a king with leprosy because he tried to burn incense.[7] I cannot think that Pekah slew one hundred and twenty thousand men in one day.[8]

If the Pentateuch is not inspired in its astronomy, geology, geography, history, or philosophy, if it is not inspired concerning slavery, polygamy, war, law, religious or political liberty, or the rights of men, women, and children, what is it inspired in, or about? The unity of God?—that was believed long before Moses was born. Special providence?—that has been the doctrine of ignorance in all ages. The rights of property?—theft was always a crime. The sacrifice of animals—that was a custom thousands of years before a Jew existed. The sacredness of life?—there have always been laws against murder. The wickedness of perjury?

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[1] 2 Chron. xii, 2, 3.
[2] 2 Chron. xiii, 17.
[3] 2 Chron xiv, 9.
[4] 2 Chron. xvii, 14–19.
[5] 2 Chron. xviii, 19–22.
[6] 2 Chron, xxv, 12.
[7] 2 Chron. xxvi, 19.
[8] 2 Chron. xxviii, 6.

—truthfulness has always been a virtue. The beauty of chastity?—the Pentateuch does not teach it. Thou shalt worship no other God?—that has been the burden of all religions.

If the Pentateuch is inspired, the civilization of our day is a mistake and crime. There should be no political liberty. Heresy should be trodden out beneath the bigot's brutal feet. Husbands should divorce their wives at will, and make the mothers of their children houseless and weeping wanderers. Polygamy ought to be practiced; women should become slaves; we should buy the sons and daughters of the heathen and make them bondmen and bondwomen forever. We should sell our own flesh and blood, and have the right to kill our slaves. Men and women should be stoned to death for laboring on the seventh day. "Mediums," such as have familiar spirits, should be burned by fire. Every vestige of mental liberty should be destroyed, and reason's holy torch extinguished in the martyr's blood.

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